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File photo

Bishop Matthew H. Clark arrives at the Diocese of Rochester's section of Downsview Park in Toronto during World Youth Day 2002.

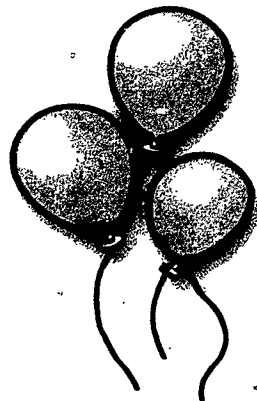
It's no wonder that the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry invited Bishop Clark to serve as their episcopal liaison (bishop representative) not once, but twice. Whenever he speaks to these national leaders or at national conferences, I receive an untold number of offers to "trade bishops"! After hearing Bishop Clark or talking with him, people are affirmed by the fact that he speaks to them honestly and openly as an equal, which displays his respect and admiration for the person they are as well as the ministry they are in. People come away refreshed and renewed, with hope for their ministry and for the youth they serve.

In John's Gospel, Jesus says that a good shepherd "calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice." (Jn 10:3b-4 NRSV). Our young church has been blessed in many ways these past 25 years by having the opportunity to be shepherded by someone who knows them by name, trusts them completely and loves them unconditionally.

And in response to all those other diocesan offers — sorry, we wouldn't trade him for the world!

Michael Theisen is director of youth ministry for the Diocese of Rochester.

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